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**The Principles of Scientific Management (1911)**

**Frederick Taylor** (1856-1915) combined an American love of machines with a passion for improving production systems. Trained as an engineer, he began to implement his notion of “scientific management” in the 1890s. Critics charged that his system dehumanized work by emphasizing machines and productivity.

*"The conservation of our national resources is only preliminary to the larger question of national efficiency."* – President Theodore Roosevelt

While a large movement has started to conserve our material resources, the less visible and less tangible effects of the wasted human effort is only vaguely appreciated. It is necessity to focus on training rather than finding the “right man” for the job in order to correct this waste. In the past the man has been first; in the future the system must be first, and the first goal of all good systems should be developing first-class men.

The principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, which in turn will create maximum prosperity for each employee. Most workers deliberately work slowly to protect their interests. There were three reasons for this inefficiency:

*First.*  The myth, which has from time immemorial been almost universal among workmen, that a material increase in the output of each man or each machine in the trade would result in the end in throwing a large number of men out of work.

* Taylor argued that the cheapening of any article in common use almost immediately results in a largely increased demand for that article, creating additional work and contradicting securing jobs for workers.

*Second.* The defective systems of management make it necessary for each workman to soldier, or work slowly, in order that he may protect his own best interests.

* Taylor described how under standard day, piece, or contract work it was in the workers' interest to work slowly and hide how fast work can actually be done, and the antagonism between workers and management must change.

*Third.* The usage of inefficient methods in production, which can result in workmen wasting a large part of their effort.

* Taylor noted the enormous saving of time and increase in output that could be obtained by eliminating unnecessary movements and substituting faster movements. While there are perhaps "forty, fifty, or a hundred ways of doing each act in each trade", "there is always one method and one implement which is quicker and better than any of the rest".

Currently, the best system of management in use is the system of "initiative and incentive." In this system, management gives incentives for better work, and workers give their best effort. The form of payment is practically the whole system, in contrast to scientific management.

His scientific management system consisted of four principles:

*First.* Let management develop a science for each element of a man's work, which replaces the old method leaving the worker to decide what was best.  
  
*Second.* Let management scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the workman, whereas in the past he chose his own work and trained himself as best he could.  
  
*Third.* Have management cooperate with the men so as to insure all of the work being done in accordance with the principles of the science, which has been developed.  
  
*Fourth.* Have management take over all work for which they are better fitted than the workmen, freeing the workmen to focus solely on their specific task.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Who does Taylor “blame” for the inefficiencies in the Industrial Workplace? What evidence do you have to support your view?
2. Although Taylor claims that both sides will benefit, who is the most likely to benefit from the implementation of scientific management catching on? What evidence from the reading supports your view (because he does have a bias)?
3. Although Taylor claims that both sides will benefit, who is the most likely to be hurt from the implementation of scientific management catching on? What evidence from the reading supports your view (because he does have a bias)?
4. Give an example for each of the three inefficiencies listed on the previous page using your own experiences or from the experience from the class today.
5. How would management take these recommendations? Which one would they support the most? Which one would they support the least?
6. How would workers take these recommendations? Which one would they support the most? Which one would they support the least?
7. Do you think that Taylor’s recommendations would further dehumanize workers or help them better their condition? Explain.
8. Based on the reading, what would Taylor say to a worker who complained about his plight?